

How Do I Manage My Medicine?

Taking medicine may be new to you, and there may be a lot to remember. For example, why are you taking it? What time should you take it? How often do you take it, and how many pills do you take?

It's very important to take medicine the right way — just as your doctor tells you.

If you don't follow your doctor's directions, what could happen? First of all, if medicine isn't taken the right way, it may not work. It could also cause side effects that may be mild — or very harmful. Without knowing it, you could counteract one medicine by taking it with another. Not taken properly, medicine can also make you feel sick or dizzy.

How can I remember to take my medicine?

- Take it at the same time each day along with meals or other daily events, like brushing your teeth.
- Use a weekly pill box with separate compartments for each day or time of day. Computerized pill boxes can alert you when it's time to take a pill or order refills.
- Ask family and friends to help remind you.
- Use a pill calendar or drug reminder chart.
- Leave notes to remind yourself.
- Try an e-mail reminder or beeper service.
- Wear a wristwatch with an alarm.

What else should I know?

- Store your medicine the way your doctor or pharmacist tells you. Keep medicine in original containers, or label new containers.
- Keep track of what pills you can and can't take together, including over-the-counter medicines.
- Always get your prescription filled on time, so you don't run out.
- Try to see the same pharmacist each time.
- Don't take more of your medicine than the prescribed dose.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist before buying a new over-the-counter medicine, such as an antihistamine or "cold tablets," to be sure they won't interfere with your prescribed medicine.
- Always check with your doctor before you stop taking a medicine.
- If you have any questions about your pills, make a note to remind yourself to ask your doctor or pharmacist.
- Tell your doctor if you have any side effects.
- Write down the names and doses of what you are taking. If you go to more than one doctor, take your updated medication list with you to each visit.
- Keep all medicines out of the reach of children.

My medicines

Ask your health care providers to help you fill in the blanks below.

Name of medicine	What it looks like	Dose	What it's for	When to take it	Doctor

How can I learn more?

- Talk to your doctor, nurse or health care professional. Or call your American Heart Association at 1-800-242-8721, or the American Stroke Association at 1-888-478-7653.
- If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It's very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.

Do you have questions or comments for your doctor?

- Take a few minutes to write your own questions for the next time you see your doctor. For example:

How long should I take my medicine?

What if I forget to take a medicine?

Should I avoid any foods or other medicines?



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